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## **First “Passive House” Apartment Project in DC Breaks Ground to Provide Homes for Homeless Families**

### *Innovative Buildings in Southeast Will Be Both Sustainable and Affordable*

Washington, DC – Transitional Housing Corporation broke ground today on an innovative apartment building project that will combine state-of-the-art environmental features with affordable rents and a slate of support services for homeless families.

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Commons will reclaim three blighted buildings in Southeast DC using Passive House architectural principles that reduce the carbon footprint and the utility costs for low-income tenants.

When finished in mid-2015, the apartments will provide 36 low and moderate income families including 12 homeless or formerly homeless families with below-market rents, employment services and other support for youth and families. One-third of the units will be reserved for families with more intensive needs.

“Our goal is sustainability, not just in the environmental sense, but in an economic sense to keep these families in a stable, supportive situation,” said Polly Donaldson, executive director of Transitional Housing Corporation (THC), a DC-based nonprofit that functions as the co-developer, landlord and service provider on this project. “We are addressing the District’s family homelessness crisis as we contribute to a cleaner city.”

The project reflects DC Mayor Vincent Gray’s twin goals of creating more environmentally sustainable buildings, while delivering affordable housing more quickly. Weinberg Commons is one of just 21 apartment buildings nationwide seeking the Passive House certification and the first multi-family project of its kind in the District.

The project will give the buildings at 5010 Southern Avenue, SE a deep energy retrofit, including super-insulation, an air-tight building shell and balanced energy recovery ventilation

which leads to extraordinary reductions in energy use and carbon emissions. The building will conform with **Passive House** certification standards.

Generally considered the most stringent energy standard in the world, Passive House building is an innovative approach to net-zero building. Instead of relying on active energy reduction systems with high installation costs, Passive House buildings concentrate on energy use reduction. Passive House buildings work with natural systems to manage heat gain and loss, saving up to 90% of utility costs. In fact, the U.S. DOE **recognizes** the Passive House approach as the most efficient means of achieving net-zero building operations.

Mayor Gray's 2011 Sustainable DC plan identifies "driving growth that is sustainable through high-performance buildings and infrastructure" as one of six overarching sustainability goals for the District.

The Weinberg Commons project also dovetails with the Mayor's new strategy for delivering affordable housing by consolidating the application process with city agencies reviewing developer applications to be in-sync with one another to produce more affordable housing in less time.

The Weinberg Commons project was financed and supported by DC Dept. of Behavioral Health, DC Dept. of Housing & Community Development, DC Dept. of Human Services, DC Housing Authority, Cornerstone, Inc, Corporation for Supportive Housing, DC Sustainable Energy Utility, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc, LISC, National Equity Fund, Inc, PIMA & Carlisle Construction Materials, and TD Bank.

Transitional Housing Corporation (THC) is a nonprofit that provides housing and comprehensive support services to over 500 homeless and at-risk families in Washington, DC so that they can make transformational changes in their own lives.

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